

25 WAYS TO PREVENT SHOPLIFTING IN YOUR RETAIL STORE

Is it possible to completely prevent theft and shoplifting in retail stores? Unfortunately, there's no way to keep your shop 100% theft-free. However, there are plenty of measures you can take now to reduce your risk of shoplifting as much as possible. These tips can help you learn how to catch shoplifters and how to prevent shoplifting in retail.

1. Know Your Times

Did you know that certain times of day are more common than others for shoplifting? Wednesday through Saturday are the most popular days for shoplifters, especially in the afternoon and on weekends. Summers and holidays are often high-alert times for theft as well.

2. Avoid Profiling

There are many stereotypes related to types of shoplifters, targeting both race and gender. However, a study from the University of Florida found that many of these are untrue. In reality, men steal more than women, and the majority of shoplifters are middle-aged and gainfully employed. As such, it's essential to treat all shoppers with the same levels of trust, respect, and suspicion.

3. Keep It Clean

A messy, unorganized store makes it easier for shoplifters to steal from, especially when you're not sure what goes where, what's selling, and what's not. To increase your oversight and minimize the likelihood of stolen items, keep merchandise clean and organized.

4. Build Relationships with Customers

Your customers are a big part of your business. The better you know them, the less likely they are to steal from you. The ones you know by name are aware that you can pick them out of a lineup, and your more honest shoppers won't be afraid to report suspicious behavior to you.

5. Build Relationships with Employees

Relationship building goes for employees as well. Forge relationships with your employees and let them know they're valued and appreciated. Internal theft is as much of a problem as shoplifting. In fact, probably more, with 75 percent of employees admitting to stealing from their employer at least once.

If employees feel engaged with your business and the work they're doing is valued, the happier they'll be — and less likely to exhibit malicious behavior like theft. In fact, the number one way internal theft was detected was a tip from another employee.

6. Watch for Loiterers

Loiterers are often bad news for businesses and usually a tell-tale sign there might be trouble on the horizon. With so many hands and so much activity, it's relatively easy for a group to snag items and

wander out. Pay close attention to people who appear to be hanging around with no intention of buying anything.

7. Run a Tight Ship

A well-oiled machine is much harder to steal from. When your employees are always at attention, your business is far less likely to be a target. Share shoplifting prevention tips like this with your employees to ensure they know how to prevent a potential crime. By showing your customers you're watching, they'll know there's no room for error in your store.

8. Watch for Shifty Behavior

Some shoplifters, especially those new to the process, may show warning signs before problems arise. They may wear large sweatshirts, spend long periods of time in the same aisle, carry large purses or bags, and continually check to see if you're watching. Know the signs and trends, and keep a close eye on customers exhibiting this type of behavior.

9. Take a Thief's Perspective

If you were a thief, what would you target? Heavy items in the back of the store or small, or easily pocketed items by the front? When arranging your store, think like a thief looking for a five-finger discount – and do the opposite. One study found that putting easily stolen items, like batteries, in a visible but hard-to-reach locations cut down on theft significantly.

10. Expand Your Team

Hiring more employees may seem like a costly solution, but putting an extra set of hands on the floor can make a huge difference. Inevitably, there will be times when you're with a customer, in the back, or otherwise unable to watch the floor. In these moments, you'll appreciate the assistance another team member can provide.

11. Employ Mirrors

If you have a large store and a small staff, it may seem impossible to watch every corner at all times. With mirrors, surveillance becomes a whole lot easier. Many stores, from convenience shops to high-end department stores, utilize rounded mirrors in the corners by the ceiling to prevent theft. This provides a broader view, ensuring you can see every last detail on your floor — even a blind spot.

12. Add Prevention Tactics

Electronic article surveillance, which refers to the tags that hang on clothing and other high-value items to deter theft, may seem like an expense only big-box retailers can afford. , Offering an easy way to ensure expensive items are protected at all times, the benefits of such tags outweigh the cost of using them.

While these systems are not cheap (it will run you upwards of \$3,000), it can prove to be an extremely valuable method to prevent retail theft. Large retailers aren't spending that kind of money if it wasn't

providing them with a substantial ROI. A few tags and a little training result in a store that's much harder to rob.

13. Put up Signs

Theft prevention signs are common in stores across the country; they often advertise security methods, fines imposed and maximum criminal shoplifting charge. While these signs may seem like all bark and no bite, research shows that a store that emphasizes punishments for shoplifting is far less likely to be robbed. To maximize effectiveness, hang signs near higher value items, like jewelry and electronics.

14. Involve the Police

Calling the police for every little-attempted theft of a \$5 lipstick or a \$1 soda may sound like overkill, but the more you do now, the better a precedent you set for the future. As one city in Arizona demonstrated, partnering with local law enforcement resulted in a shoplifting decrease of over 21 percent, helping businesses to stay safe from the antics of petty criminals.

15. Use a Point of Sale System (POS)

Do you know how many items you have on your shelves? Do you know the exact value of those products? Does the inventory sold, match the revenue coming in? If not, a POS system can help you better account for inventory shrinkage and spot potential issues before they get out of hand.

Strong inventory management techniques are a great way to help reduce retail loss. This also ties back to our point about running a tight ship and being organized on the floor. A POS system not only organizes inventory by tracking items by category and department, but to also tracks your cost, margin, quantity on-hand, and even a reorder trigger and quantity.

Also, a point of sale system can help reduce your internal risk of theft. No business owner wants to believe their employee is stealing from them, but unfortunately, it's a reality for some.

A POS system will help track every single transaction and function that occurs at the point of sale during an employee's shift. You may start to notice an employee that always has a lot of discounts or voids. The 'no sale' function is occurring too many times in one shift. These are all insights you can gain from your POS system to help you define a pattern and act your findings before it's too late.

16. Manage Refunds and Returns

Shoplifting isn't the only way criminals can target your store – fraudulent returns are another easy way for thieves to squeeze money out of your business. If you're lenient with returns, allowing every little request to pass through your drawer, it'll be easy for a professional shoplifter to take advantage of you. Instead, develop a strict policy and stick with it.

17. Get Strict With Receipts

In the world of shoplifting, receipts are the best way to prove a legitimate sale versus a robbery. Instead of letting customers walk out the door with a cheery wave, consider appointing someone to check bags and receipts by the entrance. Even if checks are brief and hurried, the idea of someone checking bags will make a difference.

18. Use Shorter Displays

Long aisles are the norm in many stores, but they can make it hard to keep an eye on what's going on with shoppers. Shorter displays make it easier to watch, allowing you to see how customers move around the store and survey merchandise while identifying potential shoplifters.

19. Put Your Checkout by the Exit

A checkout in the back of the store may be convenient, especially when it comes to checking and organizing the stockroom, but this strategy can be bad for business. When you want to watch your store as efficiently as possible, a checkout in the front by the door makes it easy for you to greet customers and make eye contact when they come in and acknowledge them when they leave.

20. Install an Entrance Alert Sensor

The buzzers and bells that ring when individuals enter or exit your store may be annoying, but they're very handy, especially for smaller, low-volume businesses. These systems work in two ways: notifying you when someone comes into your store, and letting shoppers know that you're watching. When you have a buzzer in place, there's no way for a shoplifter to sneak past you when you have your back turned.

21. Keep an Eye on Registers

Swiping cash out of the register is an easy way for thieves to steal from you without ever disturbing the merchandise. When you're working the register, never, ever leave it unattended. Instead, let your team member on the floor handle customer disputes while you stay put.

22. Use Lockers

Banning the use of large bags, purses, and backpacks while shopping may seem paranoid, but doing away with these items makes it much harder to steal high-value items. By employing a locker system, you can be sure shoppers aren't sneaking merchandise into their bags and running away with your hard-earned cash.

23. Monitor Dressing Rooms

Dressing rooms provide a perfect way for unscrupulous customers to steal. Instead of allowing them to wander in and out at will while trying on clothes, position an employee near the fitting rooms and use a number system to track how many items enter and exit. This way, you'll always know if something is missing.

24. Install Security Cameras

Surveillance cameras are the single best way to prevent theft, allowing you to keep an eye on the whole store and capture images of thieves in the act of committing a crime. Gone are the days of grainy video, dark scenes, and faces you could only see in broad daylight. You can now see clear images day or night, rain or shine.

A combination of advances in video technology and better lenses have made security cameras and surveillance systems worth the investment. And let's not forget the bonus of saving on your insurance premiums by installing a surveillance system.

25. Have a Plan

When someone steals from you, how will you respond? Will you call the police? Will you attempt to handle it in-house? Will you let it go? No matter what avenue you plan to take, a step-by-step procedure is indispensable. With a game plan on the books, you can be ready to react when a shoplifter does target the inventory you've invested so much to acquire.

There's no way to shut down theft or shoplifters entirely, but the right tactics can provide the ammo you need to fight back. With these tips, you can learn how to spot shoplifters, take preventative action, learn how to reduce shoplifting while keeping your retail business safe.